Then the Shibukombe (emissary) is invited, whose job it is to uncover 584
the covered baskets. In payment for his work he may take all the
small presents placed on top of the food [ng tuntu toonse tulya
bashikwile pa bwali, fyakwe].

Period Between the Engagement and Nubility: [kukoba]. During the 583
period preceeding nubility the fiancée often goes to her fiancé's hut
in order to do small chores, such as sweeping, lighting the fire, draw-
ing water or whitewashing the house. These chores are supposed to
reveal to the fiancé the devotion and skill of his future wife
[kuchichila]. Furthermore, she will live in her fiancé's house for
a considerable time in order to show that she is docile [kupetama].

When his fiancée is on the eve of menstruation, the fiancé
goes to live with his father-in-law [shifyala]. He does several favors
for him. As a token of respect, the food which is offered him is al- [57]
ways covered by a basket. His bwali will be offered him uncovered
only on the day when the Shibukombe is invited to uncover the wed-
ding bwali, before which the latter will pour water for him to wash
his hands [kusambikisha], and after having whitened the spot where
the fiancé washed his hands (nsoni shapwa) with clayey soil
(kushingula).

Chisungu (Menstruation). In the forest. When the fiancée has her 88 ●
first period, [kuwa chisungu], she runs to hide in the forest. After
finding her, her kinswomen collect around her in order to make cer-
tain of the fact [kamukumba]. They then break small branches from
the trees, and while dancing they sing as follows: "We have gone to
tell the little spotted lion-cub that his master has come" [Twaire
sobera nkalamo ya mabala chibinda taluba]. They then go to the
fiancé's house, and place their branches on the roof saying: "Nshimba,
nshimba" (wild cat). From this moment on, the fiancé takes the name
of shichisungu, and the fiancée, nachisungu.

At home. Then the women go to find the nachisungu (the
nubile fiancée) in the forest, and after having submitted her to vari-
ous [213] tests, such as jumping across a bundle of fire-wood or drink-
ing water from a jug which contains small tadpoles, they carry her
back to her home on their shoulders. The fiancée's father leaves his
hut and goes to stay elsewhere. Henceforth there will be the mako [54]

taboo between him and his daughter. The nubile fiancée then lives with her mother in complete seclusion for an entire month. This is the kuingisha chisungu, literally, to make certain of the marriage-ability. The girl's mother ceases to wash and bathe herself [kuoa]; the girl stops shaving her hair [kubea].

The Menstruation Dance. [Kuimba chisungu]. This phase is also called the kufumie chisungu, which means in honor of the nubile maiden. Ordinarily this ceremony takes place in June or July, when the "eleusin" [Translator's note: raggee, a cereal grain] is ripe. This is a time of plenty and beer. The kinswomen of the young girl invite the nachimbusa (the female director of this ceremony). As a token of the invitation, they give her a present [lusomo], such as a chicken, for example.

From the moment when dancing in honor of the nubile girl begins, all sweeping of the hut must cease, and only the throwing of ashes [mito] into the mupunda (space between the door and the hall on the left of the entrance) may take place. The women then go to fetch the nakalamba, whose task it is to invite the other women to come and dance, sing and beat the drum. She is not shaved and must be white with dust [abuta tutu]. These are the words she uses for the invitation: "Companions, help me in my task" [Bamayo, ngafweni ko mulimo]. All the women assemble in the hut. The director [nachimbusa] is the one who gives the sign for the singing to begin. Everyone falls in with the refrain by beating the drum or dancing. The nachimbusa, who also dances, is clothed in a genet skin and wears a tuft of feathers as head-gear. She sings: "Chimbusa chikulu chienda ne ngala" (I am the director who walks with her head covered by a tuft of feathers). The dance begins at about sundown and ends towards dawn. The songs for this dance are extremely varied, some innocent and praising, others equivocal and often obscene. They dance like this for an entire month. Food is brought in daily in order to give strength to those who are dancing.

The Beer. After the month of "menstruation dancing" is over, the local beer is prepared in large quantities. It is offered to the fiancé's mother. Early in the morning after the night when the beer was prepared, the [214] women flock to the fiancée's house for the mbusa. They split into two groups; while some go to fetch white clay (mpemba) others gather fire-wood (nkuni).

Mbusa (preparation in the forest). The women who have gone to the forest cut the flexible branches of the trees (mienge). Then they fashion a sort of termite's nest in which they hide a handful of musuku leaves. A pole is passed through the nest ... The pole supporting the termite's nest is carried by two women who sing a song in honor of the fiancée: "Mu luendo lulia lwine batebera Na chisungu chifinga cha nkuni." The children also carry bundles of firewood on their backs, after the nakalamba has first annointed them with the red dye of nkula. Then they all come back singing: "Nshimba mulya ya ngombe." The children take up the chorus: "Ngombe isho we ulele, ngombe isho kufula kocho... ." 881

Mbusa (arrival at the village). After returning to the village, they unload the clay and bundles of wood in the hut. The clay will serve to make the fireplace. In this special fireplace, lit with a fresh fire, the famous highly seasoned dish for the wedding is cooked, the namushinwa, consisting of beans, sorghum (millet), chick-peas, lentils, tubers and peas, vegetable marrow and castor. They sing: "Natukalabe Babisa, baleto ku kalaba." [262]

Mbusa (matrimonial symbols). The women put down the white clayey earth, treading it down with charcoal and the red dye of nkula. They put all of it down near the hearth. [364]

The female director of the ceremony [nachimbusa] then brings in two baskets filled with earthenware mbusa made a long time ago and always used for the same purpose. Please note that the nachimbusa is a sort of priestess whose office is hereditary. It is her job to preside at wedding ceremonies. The mbusa which she uses represent wedding symbols and have various shapes. I was able to purchase some of these mbusa by paying a great deal. Some are shaped like bi-sexual dolls, others are shaped like small vases with spiney walls, yet others resemble flower vases, certain others look like animals, one in the form of a big snail which emits a sound resembling a lion's roar. Once the ceremony [215] is over, the nachimbusa takes home her mbusa. When she dies, they are buried with her in her grave. During her whole life she carefully hides them in termite nests or under rocks in the river-bed. Here are the names of the various mbusa according to their form or use: chiluwe, chimundu, chimingi posa masamba, chilyobe wa ngoma, mwansa 881 793 [323 532] 552 881

chipepe, mulume wa ngala, chilombo, mangalawila, mwikala chishasha, wingeminino utepauka. 552 881

This is how they proceed. The nachimbusa puts down a large mbusa made of baked clay. It has two paws and is funnel-shaped at the apex; this is the chimundu (big lion). On top of the mbusa she twists flexible tree branches [mienge] into a circle, then coating them with earth [maloba] and giving it the shape of a lion. In the upper cavity she places tufts of plants to imitate the mane; the teeth and eyes are imitated by artistically inserted pumpkin and melon seeds. When it is finished, two women come close, imitating the roar of a lion with special mbusa; the meaning of this is to instruct the future husband as follows: "You, if you abandon your wife and if you go alone to the river, you will be caught by the lion" [Iwe nga ukalalekeresha mukashi, waya ku ifwe eke, ukasumwa ne nkalamo]. Please note here that none of these matrimonial symbols is meant to be immoral. Their purpose is to instruct the future spouses in their duties as husband and wife, to give them courage to cope with the everyday dangers of life in the bush, to incite them to stand up courageously to the difficult tasks to which both of them will be bound. 532 881

Nkuni (firewood). In the course of the day, the women have notified the husband to go and get firewood in the forest. He ties a package [chifunda] containing a small live rat [kapanga mutuntuntu] to his bundle [chifinga]. This is a sign that his fiancée has not yet slandered him. If he knows that his fiancée has already spoken ill of him, he will not put a rat in the bundle. During this time the women end their mbusa ceremonies. 881

The fiancé is invited. At this time the singing starts and the drums beat more loudly; the women call the fiancé with the following words: "Kalombo, musha, uko uire teba, taulabwela." The fiancé will thereupon appear carrying the bundle of wood on his back. He is accompanied by his sister or a female cousin. As both enter the hut, and the bundle of wood is [216] put down, and dancing in the young girl's honor begins, the nakalamba (i.e. the woman who has invited the neighbors to the celebration) unties the bundle of wood and the package. She then takes two chickens; the fiancée sits on one of them in order to kill it [kufwantikisha], while the nachimbusa sits on the other. Once the chickens have died they are plucked and cooked.

The bow and arrow. At this time the fiancé goes outside and invites his kinsmen to enter. The latter bring a bow and arrow. As soon as they arrive on the threshold, the one who leads them starts a song: "Mushe inama yandi, taibula mwine, walasa..." They all enter. The fiancé stands in the middle of the house drawing the bow and arrow; he is supposed to pierce a special mbusa which the women have fixed on the wall slightly above the place where his future wife is sitting. If he pierces the mbusa, there are shouts of joy: Here is a true fiancé, the girl will be his wife," etc. If he misses, the poor boy is subjected to an avalanche of scolding and cursing: "Chimbi chikesa" (There will be trouble in this household). In this case the fiancé has to submit to tests in order to show them his lack of success with the bow was due to bad luck. 881 [707]

Mwansa chembe (headdress of feathers). If the young man has succeeded in piercing the mbusa, the women take up another mbusa of clay which is set with plumes /ngala/. They use them to make a headgear for the fiancé while singing: "Wamumona Mwansa chembe, mulume wa ngala aisa...". This is to tell him that if he makes his wife suffer, so will he. 881 292

Chinungi (porcupine). The headgear is taken off and a mbusa which is a facsimile of a porcupine is brought up. This spiny mbusa is then attached to the fiancé's neck by means of a cord. The fiancé has to bend down while the women sing: "Chinungi, posa matamba, twairiwa ku isamo." Then they take it off /kukobola/. 881 301

Nsensengwe. This is the fruit of a river tree which causes itching. The women knead this fruit and then rub it on the fiancée's arm with a little brush. From this moment on she ceases to be a young girl and becomes a woman (mukalamba). 884 824

Chitenge. This is a crossbeam attached to the roof inside the house. The fiancé is suspended from it and while he remains thus suspended /alapelela/ the women sing: "Lelo, atema pa chitenge," etc. He jumps down when the song is finished. 881

Mipeto (hoop). The women then make a circle around the fiancé with hoops. The fiancé takes some of the hoops and lets them roll towards his /217/ fiancée. The women sing: "Mulangire alole..." The

fiancé goes home. The fiancée gets up and jumps across several mbusa 881
to the approving shouts of the women.

IMMEDIATE PREPARATIONS FOR THE WEDDING. Questions and Instructions. It is necessary to instruct the fiancée with regard to certain facts pertaining to marriage. Only a few women will be with her; other women wait outside and beat the drum in order to prevent any indiscreet ears from listening to what is said to the fiancée. The nachimbusa and the nakalamba, in particular, question the fiancée on certain details with regard to menstruation. The fiancée has to answer truthfully and make a full confession; a lie could be fatal in these circumstances. The women then give her whatever counsel and advice is deemed desirable.

Beer. Once the meeting is over, an invitation to drink beer is issued 881
/limalwa/. Everyone drinks beer: relatives, neighbors, friends. The 273
drinking and dancing last through the night.

Kuoa (the bath). At dawn the women accompany the fiancée to the 881
river; they take along some mbusa and sing: "Naya ku kuabika nkwa, 515
mairo kusala kuli ko." When they arrive at the river, they put the fiancée in the middle of the current, even if it is very cold. She has to stay there until the sun rises. The women then take her out of her river bed and wash her. They then braid the grass bracelets which they put around her wrists and ankles while singing: "This is how your [20]
husband will give you bracelets." They pick tall grass to make a kind of tuft /nsonshi/ from it, which they put on her head. While pouring water over the top of it, they sing: "Euma" (may she never be dry).

Ashes. When they return to the house, they find that the nakalamba 881
has swept away the ashes, which have not been swept since the fiancée started having her period. These ashes are thrown under a tree called mufungo, whose fruit is delicious. This is to insure that the marriage [824]
of the two be a good one /kunakilila/. Then a basket full of filundu (tree bark garments) is brought in. This is another of the fiancé's presents. The women rub the fiancée with oil until she is streaming. The fiancé does the same. Then the women dress the fiancée /218/
as well as her younger sister /nshindishi/ with all the filundu; this is the moment for presenting the gifts in the public square.

Mashikulo (presents). The fiancée, adorned in her most beautiful garments, is lead out from the bush; she is backed by women attendants who sing: "Waleleka, mayo, waemba, waemba mune." (Oh,

companion, thou art beautiful, thou art elegant.) The women then 881
make her sit down on a mat in the middle of the courtyard. The fiancé presents his gifts. He is accompanied by friends and relatives. At the end of the ceremony the fiancée is brought back home. Then the nachimbusa is given great quantities of food in payment of her work [imali]. Moreover, the nachimbusa takes all the filundu off the fiancée and appropriates them, except for what she gives to the nakalamba. Henceforth the fiancée remains alone with her mother. Her fiancé gives her two other filundu. Thus ends the chisungu ceremony.

WEDDING. Mpango (wedding presents). For the wedding proper other 585
gifts are prepared. For this purpose, the shibukombe is again invited. The fiancé's father says to him: "Take these presents and give them to the fiancée's parents." The shibukombe carries out the order. The fiancée's father says: "It is agreed from now on my daughter may be his wife." Beer, bwali and chickens are then carried in. When everything is ready [pekanya], the father-in-law says to the shibukombe "Tell my son-in-law to tell his mother about it." In the evening, the fiancée's paternal aunt [nasenge] is invited to the house.

At the fiancé's. In the evening, the nasenge goes to fetch the fiancée, her niece, and carrying her on her back [amupapa], she brings her into the fiancé's hut. When she has brought her inside, she tells her: "Kakula mushingo," etc. Whereupon she goes outside but stays near the hut.

Instructions. Immediately the fiancé goes out to receive instructions 585
from the elders. After this instruction, the husband is given two ivory 784
ornaments with which he is to rub his body all night long. The spouses must not scrape their nails with tupande tubili, for this would cause the nails to grow out of proportion and fall out [koboloka] as well as to make the entire body rot [ondoloka]. They also have been admonished not to blow on the fire in order to fan the flame, as this would cause them to waste away. Someone else must light and maintain the fire during this night.

Actus matrimonialis. The fiancé returns to this hut, where he is a- 585
waited [219] by the fiancée and ubi faciunt actus conjugalis (where the marriage is consumated.) If they succeed, they throw burning firewood outside. All the witnesses waiting in the courtyard utter

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not only necessary, but it is the only constituent of his diet which actually ranks as food. All other foodstuffs, whatever their nutritive value, he considers merely as additions to the essential *ubwali*, as snacks to be eaten before the main meal is prepared, or as substitute foods during the hunger months. In fact, there are very few types of food which he eats without porridge, except the various gourds and pumpkins on which he is forced to live when his grain is exhausted, or sweet potatoes—a fairly recent introduction—maize, honey, and fruits of the bush. All these may be eaten freely, but are simply not considered to make a meal. I have watched natives eating the roasted grain off four or five maize cobs under my very eyes, only to hear them shouting to their fellows later, 'Alas, we are dying of hunger. We have not had a bite to eat all day'. This attitude is in complete contrast to that of most of the Southern Bantu, who live almost entirely on maize.[1]

The importance of millet porridge in native eyes is constantly reflected in traditional utterance and ritual. In proverb and folk-tale the word *ubwali* stands for food itself. When discussing his kinship obligations, a native will say, 'How can a man refuse to help his mother's brother who has given him *ubwali* all these years?' or, 'Is he not her son? How should she refuse to make him *ubwali*?' In fact, he uses the word as we do 'bread' in such phrases as 'daily bread' or 'working for our bread and butter', but more constantly, and really with better reason.

In Bemba ceremonial *ubwali* stands for food and indirectly for ordinary daily intercourse. Millet flour, meat, and salt represent the essential foodstuffs in the girl's initiation rite (*icisungu*), and at the founding of a chief's village, when small portions of each are buried beneath the walls of the Sacred Kitchen of the tribe.[2] At marriage a ceremonial exchange of dishes of *ubwali* between the relatives of the bridegroom and the bride occurs at one stage of the proceedings. A tiny lump of the porridge, made with special ritual precautions, is used to touch the lips of any individuals coming to an end of a ritual fast, whether during initiation, marriage, inheritance, &c. Further, an individual may himself announce that he is going to abstain from *ubwali* in order to show that he wishes to put himself in a special class apart from the ordinary activities of his fellows. Men or women

[1] Eaten, of course, in larger quantities and prepared as flour—'mealie-meal'.
[2] Cf. p. 48[illegible]

[Erratum, should be p. 148. — Analyst]

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laborious and the product bitter to the taste. European salt is much better liked, but it is hard to get except in districts near white stores. In distant parts of the country both European and Mpika salt are used for barter, and the traveller will notice as he gets farther and farther away from civilization that the purchasing power of salt goes up and that of money goes down. The white man's carriers are given salt in part payment for their work so that they may buy their provisions with it, and women prefer it to any other form of payment for small services. I have often found that children would rather be given a little European salt than a sweet, and they eat it neat. At Katenda's village during a period of shortage (March 1933) some children, who had been living for some weeks chiefly on gourds, picked up grains of salt from the floor of my tent with moistened fingers. Their avid faces were striking.

The craving for salt is so strong that the word itself (*umucele*) has come to have figurative meanings. In proverbs and folk-tales the husband goes to fetch salt from distant places, and this represents the fulfilment of his duties as a husband. In the girls' initiation ceremony the woman who dresses up as a mock bridegroom at one stage of the ritual, carries an imitation lump of salt over her shoulder, and small pieces are included among the sacred objects (*mbusa*) presented to the girl during the rite. In the ceremonial of founding a chief's new village, salt, together with flour and meat, are buried in the foundations of the ruler's hut. Nowadays, too, the word *umucele* is sometimes used as a generic term for European goods as being the most highly valued of these. Two old women who came to live near Kasama because of the shopping facilities there, described their motive as, 'We came to lick a little of the white man's salt'.[1]

(*c*) *Meat.* The natives' longing for meat is also almost a craving. Meat and fish are considered the *umunáni par excellence* and a special word *ubukashya* is used to describe the hunger for meat as distinct from other foods. The supply of game has probably always been inadequate in this area, but the situation is considerably worse to-day. I have noticed that natives returning from the copper field, however sceptical they may be of the other advantages of civilization, are all unanimous that 'It is fine to get so much meat.' In his own country it is no exaggeration to

[1] *Twaisako kumyanga tumucele.*

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their village life, and, as in most other Bantu societies, the common, and sometimes the essential way of fulfilling social obligations. Beer is the present of honour between kinsmen. It is carried to chiefs as tribute, used to reward labour, or given as an offering to spirits. Nowadays, it may be one of the few ways by which a woman, left deserted by her husband, can make money for clothes.[1] Men cultivate extra ground in order to have enough millet for brewing. Abundance of beer is the glory of a commoner's hospitality, or a chief's court. Without it tribal councils cannot be held, and marriage or initiation ceremonies do not take place. For all these reasons it is impossible to describe the physical effects of native beer-drinking without knowing the part it plays in the Bemba's whole social life. *Ubwalua* is served in big calabashes holding about 2 or 3 gallons, or in disused petrol tins. It consists of a thick brown sludge to which hot water is added constantly throughout the evening so that the brew gets gradually weaker and weaker.[2] It is drunk through a hollow reed two or three gulps at a time. It is a cloudy fluid, often full of gritty particles, with a clear sharp taste not unlike the bitter flavour of English beer. Most natives become positively lyrical as to its qualities. They say it makes them rejoice (*ukusansamuka*) and that it warms their hearts (*ukukafyo mutima*)—the ordinary phrase used for getting excited and also angry. Old councillors at the chief's court who have become used to a regular supply of beer, complain bitterly if they are deprived of it. They say that it is bad for them to eat 'cold food', i.e. ordinary meals, and that they need something to 'burn their stomachs just there' (with a hand laid on the spot), and in fact beer must be much easier to digest in old age than most other Bemba foods.

Beer is recognized as making a man more talkative, liable to quarrel, or indulge in illicit love-making, and men whose hearts get hot quickly, to repeat the native phrase, are avoided at beer-drinks, if possible, because they may involve their friends in legal liabilities. I have even heard of cases where Bemba refused to marry into families with a reputation for becoming excitable when drunk. But drunkenness itself is not despised. In fact the drunkard

[1] The sale of beer is illegal in this district, but it is practically impossible to prevent the trading of small quantities.

[2] In samples taken at the beginning and at the end of an evening respectively, Dr. Widdowson found that the alcohol content varied from 4·44 per cent. to 2·10 per cent. (I am indebted to Mr. Douglas Miller of the Education Department for dispatching these samples.)

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423 property of their maternal uncles, and I have seen a young woman snatch fully half of a basket of wild spinach her *nalume* was carrying across the village. When questioned she shrugged her shoulders and laughed, saying, 'Well, isn't he the *nalume*?' It must be remembered, too, that elder brothers have rights to their juniors' property quite irrespective of their needs. Nowadays men demand small gifts of money as a share of their younger brothers' earnings, and they also send for baskets of food on occasion, and often use the word *kutula* which is that applied to the giving of tribute to the chief. All these relatives of the husband take, or are presented with, uncooked food, and are not incorporated in the wife's eating group.

These different claims of each marriage partner are easily adjusted if the man has a separate granary of his own (*bwa mulasa*), as used to be the custom. Where there is a single grain bin the first years of marriage involve a good deal of mutual suspicion between the husband's relatives and the wife's. The family, usually living in another village, are always on the look-out to see that they get their dues. I have seen women arrive to look inside one of their kinsmen's granaries to judge for themselves whether his bride was being stingy or not. On one occasion in the hunger months a man's mother arrived in quite a friendly spirit at her daughter-in-law's hut, climbed inside the latter's granary and glanced at the contents with an appraising eye. She came down saying, 'Let it be (*Cibe*),' explaining to me, 'There are only three baskets there. I shall not take them. I must leave it to my son's children.' Provided that the husband's family are satisfied that the girl is not being mean, they are quite content, but the danger is so clearly recognized that
[881] at her initiation ceremony the girl sings a song carrying two clay models of baskets, one on her head and the other in her hand. She has to sing, 'She carries her marriage on her head, it is her clan (i.e. her own people) which is dangling below' (i.e. the husband's relatives are in the superior place, on the head).[1] The right to use all other foods, such as cassava, sweet potatoes, or legumes, is not so frequently a matter of contention between husband and wife, chiefly because these foods are not so highly valued and exist in such small quantities. I did not hear of many quarrels in this respect.

All these kinship dues are acquiring a good deal of importance

[1] *Cupo asenda pa mutwe waseshya mukoa.*

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262 and during the recent locust scourge the villagers whose gardens escaped destruction complained that they were not really better off than their fellows for 'our people come and live with us or beg us for baskets of millet'. But within small limits there is a difference between one housewife and another in her successful management of her grain bin. For one thing, as has been described, she generally cooks roughly the same amount of food however many visitors arrive. The careful housewife also restricts her brewing of beer to necessary occasions, i.e. for a ceremony or a working party, unless she has plenty of millet. Further, there are certain 574 traditionally accepted ways by which she can avoid her tribal obligations. Within limits she can conceal her supplies. The [881] young girls at their initiation ceremonies are in fact taught to hide a little food for their husbands at night, 'to give him the thing which is put by in the dark at night', and I have often seen women take a pot of beer and conceal it in a friend's granary on the reported arrival of some elderly relative. To refuse hospitality with a pot of beer sitting on the hearth would be an impossible insult, but a bland assertion that 'Alas, Sir, we poor wretches (*ifwe balanda*)! We have not a thing to eat here' is sometimes necessary. This would not be done in the case of a near relative, but only with a more distant kinsman of a classificatory type, or one of the well-known 'cadgers' of the family.

576 Bemba etiquette is also on the side of the housewife, since children are taught from their earliest years never to ask for food except in a near relative's hut, and not to look around a hut or into a granary. In fact, one definition of a witch or a wizard (*umuloshi*) is a person who comes and sits in your house and says, 'I expect you are going to cook soon. What a fine lot of meat you have to-day', or 'I expect the beer will be ready this afternoon', or some such remark. The girl at an initiation ceremony I witnessed was [881 538] taught to sing a gesture song about a tortoise:

*Fulwe pa fyakwe*
*Aingishyo mukoshi*
*Mu ci fwambaka;*

i.e. 'The tortoise in his own house puts in his neck under his shell' of which the moral is said to be: 'Don't be like the tortoise which shrinks its head into its shell when it is at home, but when it is abroad, (i.e. in somebody else's house) puts its head out and asks for things or peers around.'

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commensurable value to the incommensurable gratitude, friendship, or respect which he wants to express. He prefers to exchange his coins for some other object, possibly of far less practical value to the recipient. The African chief, on the contrary, is more flattered on receiving a coin, however small, than anything else, because, as he says: 'money is respect (*umucinshi*)'. Small coins are constantly used as presents of honour to relatives, and it is quite common for a servant who wants to make an elegant gift to his white master to do so by presenting him with a threepenny or a sixpenny bit. Sums of money are used as compensation in cases of injury or insult.

In particular ceremonies money again performs special functions. At a marriage or an initiation rite coins are used instead of the old bark-cloth, and also as a payment for ritual services or as a means of removing taboos. Sixpence or a shilling may be offered to the woman who lights a girl's fire on the morning after her marriage, to those who whitewash the hut after a funeral ceremony, or to remove a taboo on eating. At the ceremonial founding of the chief's new village there is now a fixed tariff ranging from 1*s*. to 10*s*. for the hereditary priests who are in charge of the rites, such as the lighter of the sacred fire, the opener of the sacred relic huts, or those who purify the chief, wake him ceremonially in the morning, or beat his hereditary drum. In all these cases the coins are used as valuables much as the ivory tusks, cloth, or bracelets of old days were employed, and their rarity makes them the most suitable objects available at the present day.

With this special attitude to money, it is not surprising that the Bemba still consider it waste to use coins for the purchase of food. money is too rare and too hardly come by to be thrown away on a commodity that can be got in some other way. Only a few years before my visit an old woman was discovered dying of starvation in a disused hut on the motor road with a 2*s*. piece tied in a fold of her cloth. It had apparently never occurred to her to use the money to buy supplies on her journey to the mines to look for her son. Younger people have naturally changed in this respect, but it is still true to say that money is never 'wasted' (*ukuposa*) on food unless it is absolutely necessary, as it is near the white towns. Even then the transition to a sale from a gift from a kinsman or a subject is a very gradual one. People buying from relatives pay less than the normal rate, and usually add some service to the transaction. Chiefs buying from subjects, as we shall see, pay nominal

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5



241 is very much liked as a food, but it does not grow well on all soils, and needs a good deal of labour to protect it from birds. Therefore it is less and less planted. Nevertheless, it is still the crop which has the greatest ritual importance, and there is something almost romantic in the natives' attitude to it. People stop at a field where it is grown and smile and say, 'How lucky the owner is to have such [643] good soil.' They describe *amasaka* districts with appreciation. It is associated with chieftainship, since Kaffir corn is necessary for much of the tribal ritual, and the greater supply of labour at the capital makes it easier to grow it. The perennial Kaffir corn (*sonkwe*) is easier to grow since it is not attacked by birds, but many Bemba do not rate its flour very highly. Both types are 241 doctored before sowing in some families (*icibyalilo*), and must 834 be protected from contact with sex. In the old days a man had 761 to purify himself after intercourse and wait three days before sowing the Kaffir corn. The crop is also considered to be injured by contact with death. 'People say: A hot person (i.e. a person who has not been ritually purified after a sex act) should not spoil the Kaffir corn; and a new death, it must not spoil it either.'[1] In the old days Kaffir-corn seeds were rubbed with a piece of dough, which had been made with water heated in the tiny marriage pot used to purify a chief mourner after the act of ritual intercourse with which he removed the taint of death from his family or village. This dough was thought to protect the seeds, as it contained elements of heat from contact with sex, and of cold from contact with death, and hence inoculated the crops against both dangers. 241 Many of these beliefs are dying now, but the tribal sacrifices of the Bemba still coincide with its first-fruit ceremony (cf. pp. 374–8); its flour is used to scatter over the dead body of a chief, and his corpse cannot be buried until the cycle of the Kaffir-corn harvest is at an end. The flour is used to fill the sacred basket in the chief's relic • [881] hut. At one point in the girl's initiation ceremonies she lays her head on *amasaka* seeds. For all these reasons, the Bemba grow Kaffir corn whenever they can, and Citimukulu plants it definitely for ceremonial purposes. He went out himself with his sons to reap it during my visit and called me specially to watch the process. He kept saying it was 'good' (*cawama*) for a chief to grow Kaffir corn.

Two other old crops of the Bemba are handled ritually, but are

[1] *Buleti bukabe teti buonaule masaka: ne mfwa mbishi tekuti ionaule masaka.*

3: Richards
881

FQ5 Bemba FQ5

[For description of chisungu or girls' initiation ceremony, see category 116, pp. 54-111; for interpretation of the ceremony, see pp. 120-168; for the distribution of puberty ceremonies in Central Africa, see pp. 170-186; for songs sung in the chisungu ceremony, see pp. 187-212.]

3: Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1956
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

# Introduction

The chisungu of the Bemba is usually described either as a puberty rite for girls or as a female initiation ceremony. It consists of a long and rather elaborate succession of ritual acts which includes miming, singing, dancing and the handling of sacred emblems. In the old days the chisungu invariably preceded the marriage of a young girl, and was an integral part of the series of ceremonies by which a bridegroom was united to the family group of his bride, in a tribe in which descent is reckoned through the woman and not through the man, and in which a man comes to live with his wife's relatives at marriage rather than a woman with her husband's.

Ceremonies similar to the chisungu have been reported from other matrilineal areas of Central Africa. They exist, for instance amongst the tribes most akin to the Bemba, such as the Bisa, Lamba and the Kaonde, as well as amongst the Cewa and the Yao of Nyasaland. They have also been reported from the North-western Province of Northern Rhodesia in the country inhabited by the Ila, the Tonga and the Sala. They occur here and there in the Belgian Congo and Angola.[1] In spite of the wide distribution of these ceremonies however we have, as yet, no full description of any one of them, nor any detailed analysis of the function they appear to fulfil. It would be true to say that, in general, puberty ritual for girls has received rather scant attention in comparison with the very full treatment which has been accorded to the various initiation ceremonies practised for boys.

Puberty ritual sets complex problems for the anthropologist. It celebrates the attainment of sex maturity in the boy or the girl, and hence the physical possibility of parenthood. Naturally enough, it reflects tribal attitudes to sex, fertility, marriage and the rearing of children, and expresses, and tries to enforce, the

[1] See Appendix A.

3: Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1956
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

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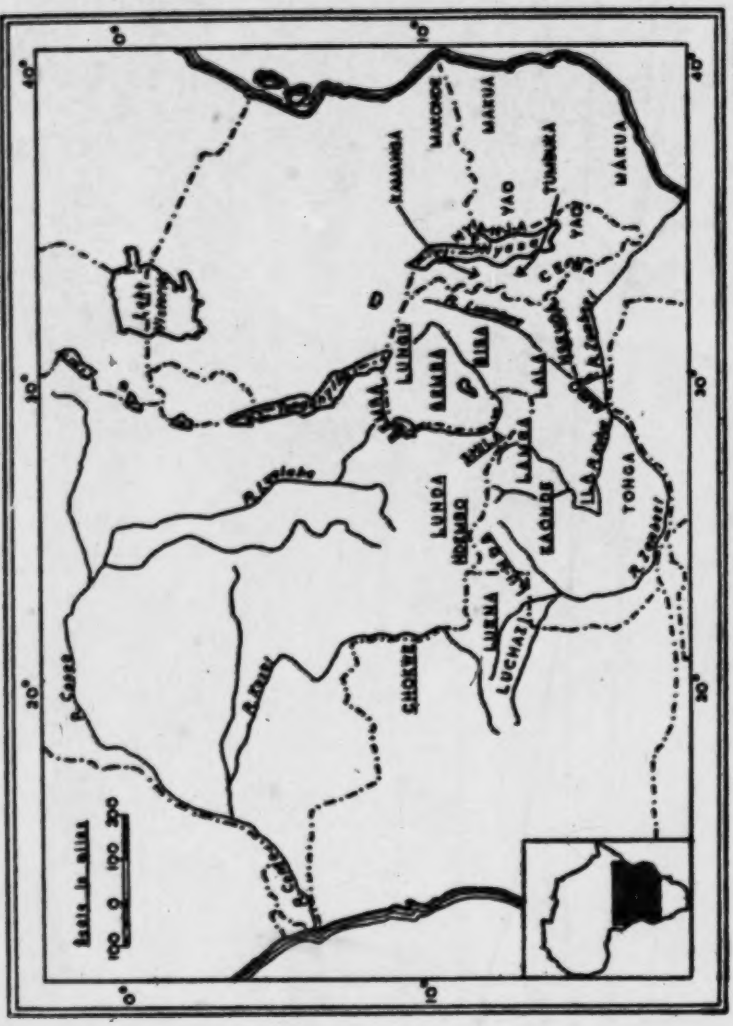


J. M. Robins

MAP SHOWING THE DISTRIBUTION OF CHIUNGU, OR CHIUNGU-LIKE CEREMONIES IN CENTRAL AFRICA

*Territorial boundaries are marked thus: · — · — · —*

*Tribes practising rites called Chiungu are underlined.*

[p. 23, p. 24 is blank]

3: Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1956
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

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301

Nangoshye, the mistress of the ceremonies. (Note the *mpande* beads described in song 39)
(See p. 61)

881
535

Chisungu solo dance outside a hut
(See p. 59)

[facing p. 49]

matrilineage is, in the case of commoners, merely a unit of succession; in the case of members of the royal dynasty it is the unit which provides for the succession of chieftainships. 613

MARRIAGE

Uxorilocal residence, at any rate during the early years of married life, is characteristic of this group of peoples. Large payments in money or goods are not made at marriage, but the bridegroom, formerly at least, gave service to his parents-in-law for a number of years and sometimes remains permanently a member of the village in which his wife was born. Among the Bemba, for instance, it is the common practice for a young man to give a small betrothal present (*nsalamo*) to his fiancée's parents. He then moves to her village and builds a house there. Young girls were often engaged in this way before puberty, and performed small services for their husbands, such as sweeping the hut, drawing water or even sleeping in the same bed with them. At puberty they were removed from their husbands' huts until the *cisungu* (girls' puberty rite) had been performed and a marriage ceremony with the ritual consummation of the union took place. When she was first married, a girl had no right to a fire-place of her own, but shared in the cooking with her mother and married sisters. Later she acquired her own fire-place, granary and garden. After two or more children had been born, and the son-in-law had won the confidence of his parents-in-law, he was allowed to remove his bride to his own village or to some other village of his choosing. The rate of conversion of such marriages is not known amongst the Bemba, although Richards states that she believes that it was higher in this area than among the Bisa.(1) Figures for the Lamba, who practise a similar type of marriage, are given on p.59. 591 583 [881] [851]

Characteristic of the Bemba marriage contract is the importance attached to the series of ceremonial presentations of food by the mother-in-law to her son-in-law, which gradually make him "free" to eat the different staple foods, and the final ceremony known as the *kuingishuya* or "the entering in of the son-in-law", which takes place after the children have been born and the marriage is established and which puts an end finally to the tabooed relationship between a man and his wife's people. The ceremonial marking of the different stages in the establishment of a permanent marriage relationship was sometimes concluded in the old days by a second marriage ceremony known as the *bainga*. This was a gesture of respect which a man of substance offered to his wife and her people in the case of a marriage which had been long established with a woman to whom the husband was particularly devoted. At the *bainga* marriage, which has also been described for the Bisa, more goods were transferred than in the case of the first marriage, and it is specifically stated to have been a display of wealth.(2) 583

Among the Unga, marriage procedures seem to be much more casual, there being no service by the son-in-law. Brelsford suggests that the marriage payment serves simply to confirm the fact that intercourse between the couple has already started and that the marriage is a fact.(3) The Bemba hold such arrangements in contempt. 583 184

(1) Richards, 9, 1950.
(2) Richards, 8, 1940.
(3) Brelsford, 1, 1946, p.108.

167 by which a young son-in-law is gradually incorporated into his wife's group
593 is therefore altered. The young wife remains behind with her own people and not with her in-laws and thus, perhaps, is in a happier position than she would be in a patrilineal society; but Read considers that the brides are better looked after among the patrilineal Nguni, where a woman's in-laws have made a considerable marriage payment for her and conceive it to be their duty to look after her while her husband is away.(1)

AGE SETS AND ASSOCIATIONS

561 Age is not stressed as a principle of social grouping. Precedence is reckoned on the basis of seniority and, as among other peoples, there are special terms for the various stages of life, but there are no boys' initi-
[381] ation ceremonies and no regiments based on age such as are found among the Nilo-Hamitic groups in East Africa. The existence of certain occupational
575 groups, as fishing communities, and of associations, such as those of iron-workers among the Aushi and Chishinga, has already been noted. While there are no secret societies among the Bemba, the Tea in the swamps of Bangweulu were renowned for *Butwa*, a secret society whose influence at one time extended the length of the Luapula river on both banks as far as Lake Mweru. Among the tribes affected by the cult were the Aushi, Unga, Shila, Tabwa in the group at present under consideration, and also the Lamba and Lunda.(2) It is suggested that in its original form *Butwa* is now extinct,(3) but it is uncertain whether it still exists in a modified form. Membership was not restricted by age or sex and people were initiated into the mysteries at a festival which lasted several days. The avowed aims of the society were to suppress selfishness and promote social life and its main attractions seem to have been dancing, singing, beer drinks and sexual licence; there was also considerable prestige attached to the ability to converse in the secret language *Lubemba*.

LOCAL AND TERRITORIAL GROUPING

361 The basic residential group is the village - a collection of 30 to 50 huts in the case of a commoner and several times this number in the case of a chief. All these peoples live in villages rather than isolated homesteads, but the size of the villages and their propinquity vary widely from area to area. Bemba villages, for instance, are often 16 to 20 miles apart.

621 The village normally develops as a kinship unit. It can come into
624 existence when a middle-aged or elderly man feels he has a sufficient following of relatives to justify his application to the chief for permission to set up a community of his own. While it is generally built close to relatives, the abundance of land makes it possible to build anywhere within the chief's administrative district. The nucleus is the headman's own matrilocal extended family composed of his young married daughters and their children, together with members of his matrilineage such as his widowed sisters and their sons and daughters. The number of relatives attached to a headman varies with his popularity and efficiency. A man may also succeed to the headmanship of a village by taking the name of his maternal grandfather or maternal uncle by the *kupyumika* system already referred to (see p.15). A

(1) Quoted by Richards, 1940.
(2) Anon. N.A.D.A., 1948. (3) Brelsford, S, 1946, p.14.

643 nothing like the year long burial rites of the Citimukulu exist in these areas.

881 (3) *Girls' Initiation Ceremony.* As has been mentioned, the initiation of boys is not here practised, but there is a form of girls' puberty ritual (cisungu) which is, in essence, a nubility rite. Formerly it lasted from two to three months, although the ceremony witnessed by Richards in 1934 was completed in six weeks. It consists in the seclusion of the girls during a series of mimetic rites representing their duties as cook, gardener, hostess and mother, which are carried out in the initiation hut and also in the surrounding bush. The girl is also given a series of some 40 to 50 pottery images (mbusa), which are associated with special songs and refer to aspects of the legal obligations of marriage. The girl is presented with these pottery images on the last night of the ceremony, after having jumped over a hoop made of crossed branches. The ceremony directly precedes marriage and is, in fact, a part of the marriage ceremonial. The bridegroom plays a part on the last night of the initiation ceremony when he shoots an arrow at a spot on the wall of the initiation hut. The formal consummation of the marriage takes place next day. *Cisungu* ceremonies of a similar kind are mentioned as existing among the Bisa, but have not yet been described.

342 compact, and sun-dried brick is increasingly being used in building. Ap-
361 pendages usually include a raised granary-storehouse, a platform for drying cassava, a kitchen, goat-and-sheep pen and latrine. Fishing camps are of more flimsy construction consisting of wattle-and-daub or grass shelters.

361 On the left bank of the Luapula, where the density of the population
621 and its mobility are less, greater concentrations of kinsfolk occur in the villages, which are more isolated and irregularly distributed.

592 In polygynous households there is a house for each wife. An open
595 space is left in front of the headman's hut which otherwise does not differ from the others. There are bachelor huts (*itanda*, pl. *amatanda*) for boys but few for girls.

361 During the Yeke raids the population was concentrated in some dozen
722 stockaded villages.

361 Village-gardens are occasionally enclosed as a precaution against the bush-pig, especially near Lake Mweru. Each village has its own landing-stage (*cabu*).

621 People are now free to build where they wish and the tendency for houses of kinsfolk to be grouped together is disappearing. As the Watch Tower movement developed separate villages were set up by believers who cultivated and harvested in the fields communally.(1)

INITIATION RITES

881 Initiation rites were more elaborate for girls than for boys. Girls still undergo *cisungu*, a *rite de passage*, common to the Bemba-speaking peoples but not found among the Luba, which aims at preparing them for their future life and duties as housewives and mothers. The instruction is imparted by the *Banacisabusa*, matrons and midwives.

[304] There are now no initiation ceremonies for boys. Lunda boys were formerly circumcised at 14-16 years of age(2) in a *mushitu* (thicket) in the Nshinda swamp. No parallel operation was performed on girls.

561 The society is not formally differentiated on the basis of age, and there are no indications of the existence of an age-set organisation.

SECRET SOCIETIES

575 Of the secret societies the *Butwa*(3) was open to both sexes. *Bulinda* is described as a women's society.(4) The *Butwa*, believed to have originated among the Twa of Lake Bangweulu and to have been established in the country prior to the arrival of the Bemba-speaking peoples,(5) had lodges "along the entire length of the Luapula as far as Lake Mweru on both the British and the Belgian sides"(6) in 1914. "Nkuba is the recognised

(1) Quick, 1940, p.221.
(2) Burton, p.128.
(3) Campbell, J. 1914.
(4) Crawford, 2, p.129.
(5) According to Campbell. Another version is that it came "with the migratory tribes of the Kazembe's, the Walunda and the Wusi, from the west about 1760." (Gouldsbury and Sheane, 1911, p.260.)
(6) Campbell, op.cit., p.77.

7:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5



554 565 royal princesses are also entitled to honour, as well as those of wives of chiefs and even consorts of princesses. It will be seen, therefore, that the royal rank is a very large one. Any one who can possibly claim connexion of any sort with any chief, dead or living, does so, although the perquisites of rank are in most cases honour only and the possible favours of the chief, rather than any material assets. Every one outside the royal clan, or *ulupwa*, is an *umupabi*, or 'ordinary person', and in old days there was a slave class below—men and women captured in battle or enslaved to their own people for some crime. These individuals were known [578 567] as *bashya*. The term is now used as an opprobrious epithet especially for foreigners—often assumed to have been enslaved by the Bemba formerly. Slavery itself no longer exists.

561 (4) *Other Principles of Social Grouping*. Age is not a principle of social grouping among the Bemba. Precedence is reckoned on the basis of seniority, as in most Bantu societies, and there are special terms used to describe the different stages of life, suckling, infant, child, adolescent, unmarried, married, old, &c. But there [881] are no regiments based on age, as in South and parts of East Africa, and the boys initiation ceremonies so often found associated with such institutions do not exist among this group of the Central Bantu.

571 There are no occupational groups, with the exception of certain specialist fishing communities on the banks of the big rivers, and in the old days there were specialist hunters of big game. Secret societies, such as the *ubutwa*, which is common among neighbouring tribes over the Congo border, and has been adopted by the Bisa of the swamps, do not seem to have been introduced among the Bemba.

105 To conclude, Bemba society is as yet undifferentiated to any large extent. The tribe is an outgrowth of a lineage-group which has occupied its present territory for 200 to 300 years, and has remained more or less homogeneous. The original kinship structure is still apparent. All the social groups to which a man belongs are ultimately based on kinship—whether it is his household village or descent group, and there are no other forms of association such as age-sets to cut across this original grouping by descent. Rank consists of membership of the clan of the first immigrants to enter the land.

(*c*) *Economic Background*. The Bemba are an agricultural people

4: Stannus D-5 (ca. 1909) 1910 FT7 Yao FT7
Bemba FQ5



mother is very careful about this in preparing his food lest he die in consequence. He henceforth bears his man's name, and it is an insult to use his child's name again. V 551 881

Initiation of girls takes place in much the same way, instruction being given by the old women. After initiation most girls wear a string of big blue beads round the neck. In some cases, where it is not convenient to go far into the bush, a patch of bush near the village may be selected, the approaches are carefully guarded, and pieces of calico on bamboos are used as flags to mark the place. V 881

*Namwali* ceremony witnessed at Kasanka's village (Awisa tribe) August 30th, 1907:—A girl about fourteen years of age, well developed. Among the Awisa the initiation ceremony takes place when the girl has reached puberty and is ready to be married. Four days are spent by the candidate in a small grass hut built in the middle of the *lweolo* ( = village open space), when instruction is given her in all her future duties by a woman who is her "friend," in this case a woman of about twenty-six years of age. B 881

About mid-day of the fourth day she was brought into the *lweolo* wearing old calico round the waist, and with two friends, one on either side, danced a kind of shuffling step backwards and forwards to the time of four drums; it was witnessed by the women of the village, who occasionally joined in the dance. After this she retired, and later in the afternoon reappeared with blue calico from waist as far as knees, white calico tied round waist as a sash, a rope of blue beads round neck and under arms. On the head she wore an erection made of flour and water with a B [535] B [302]

FIG. 1.

central crest into which were stuck little pieces of reed, lines of red were painted on the white ground as shown in sketch. Always supported by her "friend" or "sponsor," she again danced for a few minutes and then departed.

This night about twelve midnight *Zingau* was to be danced; all the evening and up till midnight a boy went round and round the village calling in a shrill voice warning none to approach. It was a very dark moonless night, and to the beating of seven drums (four small, two medium sized, one big) the *Zingau* came into the *lweolo*. One was an elephant 8 feet high with a man in each pair of legs—made of grass, trunk and tusks complete; the other, called an *Nzwala* (a small antelope), resembled a dwarf jack-in-the-green more than anything else. The elephant pranced, the *Nzwala* spun round and round; each was attended by a man with a B [534] B [778]

4: Stannus D-5 (ca. 1909)1910 FT7 Yao Bemba FQ5



rattle who ran in front of it, and by whom the *Ningas* made appearance of being baffled. The performance was witnessed by a circle of women and a few men. When the moon gave evidence of rising the figures disappeared.

The following morning the girl was again brought to the *bwalo* about 11 a.m. and seated on a mat between her "friend" and her mother, while the women danced to the time of seven drums. Her head was anointed with water and shaved, the process was started by a woman and then finished by a man, apparently the village barber; the left side of the head was shaved first. The mother was shaved by a woman at the same time.

While this was going on, presents were being made—maize, beads, a chicken, tobacco, bracelets, etc. When the shaving was finished several women came and spoke to the girl, after which she was taken away for the bathing in the lake close at hand, returning about 1 p.m. in new blue calico from waist to knees with white sash, the body well oiled all over, to the time of one small drum played by an old man; then, supported on either side by two "friends," she waited a few moments while several women did a few shuffling steps, she then advanced alone and did a few steps. She then made a present of a chicken and tobacco to the drummer, and then to her father, kneeling to each. Again she danced alone, running to and fro

FIG. 2.

and spinning round quickly. During this time two masks, the *Sanchuna* and *Nkolola* (Fig. 2), appeared and mixed with crowd, danced about and made funny remarks; they went up to the girl and performed a kind of *danse-du-ventre*.

After thus dancing in the village she goes round to the houses of all her relatives, beginning at her father's house, and repeats the dance together with addition of a little *danse-du-ventre*, the masks (*Sanchuna* and *Nkolola*) go round with her, her immediate attendant being always her "friend." This night and the next day she spends in the house with her friend, the evening of the next day she goes to a separate house arranged for, and has to have coitus with a man who is asked to oblige; on emission taking place he has to withdraw in time, and the semen is collected on a cloth which has to be seen by the women. The following night she goes to the house of her betrothed to live with him; she has probably been betrothed since she was an infant.

About the *Sanchuna* and *Nkolola* I could learn nothing. These men wore masks with calico covering the back of the head and neck, a kilt made of strips of leopard skin and grass bound round their arms and legs.